VALSALL

RUNNERS TURN OUT FOR GREAT PUDDING RACE Page 2



AUTHOR'S MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD Page 6



PASSING ON LIFE **SKILLS TO YOUNGSTERS** Page 9



Schools are celebrating league leap

Children and teachers in Walsall are celebrating after proving to be the most improved in the region in the latest primary league tables.

The borough climbed from 104 to 79 in this year's SATs rankings for Key Stage 2. Top of the table was Pool Hayes Primary in Willenhall. Among the other high achievers in science. English and maths were Watting Street in Brownhills.

It is named with St Joseph's Catholic in Darlaston, which has increased by 22.6 per cent in English since 2008.

ton, which has increased by 22.6 per cent in English since 2008.

Palfrey Junior was named in top 200 most improved schools across the country in the statistics released today.

Altogether the number of schools with 100 per cent reaching Level 4 in science was 10, and in English and maths was three.

In schools where students did not take the SATs papers, teacher assessments were used so that all students' efforts were acknowledged at school level. Cabinet member for children's services, Councillor Rachel Andrew, said: "These are excellent results which prove that all the hard work by students, teachers, schools and professionals is paying dividends for our young people in Walsall. We are seeing improvements each year."

There were also smiles at Leamore Primary school for being among one of the top schools in the borough

There were also smiles at Leamore Primary school for being among one of the top schools in the borough for its SATs results.

The progress of the school was recognised after being highlighted as one of the top 10 in Walsall for level four in English, Science and maths. It was in the top two in the borough for contextual value added, which measures how well a school helps pupils progress while tackling deprivation, ethnicity and gender. The school in Bloxwich Road has been a pioneer of teaching technology with pupils embarking on a GCSE IT course before even starting secondary education.

pupils embarking on a GGSE II course before even starting secondary education. Last year it launched its own pupil radio station, Little Monsters Radio. Headteacher David Brownsword said he was "absolutely thrilled" with today's announcement.

105-year-old town bakery closes 'owing £40,000'

T SE

A family-run bakery in the heart of Walsall has closed down leaving 19 people out of work after running up rent arrears.

Hollands Craft Bakery in John Street has been forced to close due to owing more than £40,000 in rent. Bosses Howard and Gwen Smith, who are both in their 70s, said they had now lost their life savings of more than £130,000 and were heartbroken to let their workers go so near to Christmas.

workers go so near to Christmas.

Hollands, established 105 years ago, is the second long-standing bakery in Walsall to shut in recent weeks following the collapse of Fletchers Foods Ltd in Stafford Street, which folded after 70 years due to money troubles.

Hollands has been closed since last week after bailiffs moved in and placed a legal notice in the window saying Mr and Mrs Smith owed rent. Grandfather-of-five Mr Smith, aged 75 of Chester Road, Brownhills, said the landlord had asked for £40,000 in rent. Mr Smith said: "There has been a very complicated dispute over rent and we will never open walsallchronicle@

expressandstar.co.uk

alled for

Heartbroken

"We have had to put 19 people on the dole just before Christ-mas. We are heartbroken." Hollands was based in a former chapel and also oper-ated a popular sandwich shop. The landlord of the building is

ated a popular sandwich shop. The landlord of the building is Brian Lowndes Print Ltd. Mr Lowndes said: "There is no dispute over rent. It hasn't been paid for 12 months. We have given them plenty of opportunity to pay and have been very patient. "If they had paid, they would still be open." With a £250,000 investment, Mr and Mrs Smith, took on the business six years ago from Mr Smith's lifelong friends Frank and John Holland.

Mr Smith's lifelong friends Frank and John Holland.

Mr Smith said: "We gave up our retirement dreams in Spain to take on the business after Alan died of cancer.

"He was my childhood friend and I wanted to carry on the business he had worked so hard on all of his life."

Dancers go mob handed



Performers from Walsall Academy of Dance are Amy York, Jordan Sylvester, Emma Woolley, Hayley Wood, Clare Newton-Sheppard and Chloe Swadkin

and molls set.

The venture is the first contract landed by the teenagers – some of whom represent the Butts Street centre at competition dance festivals. They have been performing at themed

parties since November and will continue to over the festive

continue to over the festive period.

Walsall Academy of Dance principal Christa Collard said: "They are doing 17 shows in total and feel really excited to have the opportunity to represent the school in this way. They range from 14 to 17 and all attend the academy several times a week."

Members are Amy York, Clare Newton-Sheppard, Emma Woolley, Hayley Wood, Chloe Swadkin and Jordan Sylvester.

Council will suffer £30m funding cut

Walsall Council will be stripped of almost £30 million in government grants over the next two years. The borough will lose £19.5m of its grants next year.

This is a reduction of 6.6 per cent, and will be fol-

lowed by £9.7m in 2012.

Across the Black Country and Staffordshire, councils and police will lose more than £188m over the

Across the Black Country and Staffordshire, councils and police will lose more than £188m over the next two years.

Walsall Council leader Mike Bird today said he felt it was "inevitable" the reduction in government cash would result in more job losses.

But it was too soon to say how many.

In the rest of the Black Country, Sandwell will see £23.7m come off its grants next year followed by another £11.7m cut the year after that.

Wolverhampton is losing £20.4m and £9.6m the year after taking its annual budget in 2011 to £292m, while Dudley will be stripped of £9.5m in 2011 and £8.3m in 2012.

West Midlands Fire Authority will lose £6.7m, 5.6 per cent of its funding, in 2011 and £2.5m in 2012 and West Midlands Fire Authority will lose £13.8m to £480.3m.

Councils have already been gearing up for major cutbacks.

Walsall is preparing to save £65m over the next three years through more than 400 job losses and the closure of libraries and Darlaston Market.

Pain-page 5

Art teacher dies in car collision

A former art teacher from Walsall was killed in a road smash which left his car trapped underneath a lorry. Ian Preston, aged 39, was driving his Ford Focus when it hit a parked lorry.

He was head of art at 5t Francis of Assisi School in Aldridge for six years and was said to be an "inspiration" to students.

He left in January to take up a teaching advisory role in Walsall but maintained close links with the school.

role in Walsall but maintained close links with the school.

News of his death was broken to the children at the school last week, and tributes left at the scene of the crash in Chester Road, Erdington, described him as an inspiration.

Philomena Mullins, the headteacher of the Erdington Road school, said the pupils were "devastated" by the news. She said: "There are pieces of art inspired by Ian in the school. Every visitor has commented on them."



Drunk mother jailed for arson at petrol station

A drunk mother who deliberately started a blaze at a Walsall petrol station that could have sparked a massive disaster has been jailed for

massive disaster has been jailed for four years. Leanne Taylor grabbed a five-litre can of paraffin and poured it over bags of charcoal also for sale on the forecourt of the Jet Garage in Walsall town centre, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. Then the 24-year-old set fire to a bag

Then the 24-year-old set fire to a bag with her lighter. The flames were stamped out before they could take hold and spread to butane gas canisters and petrol pumps.

Prosecutor Mark Rees said: "It burned one bag of charcoal but fortunately the flames spread no further because of the actions of a man who was leaving the garage.

"When the security guard came out of the booth to see what was happening Taylor went to hit him. The police were called and she was abusive. She later

admitted what she had done but had no

admitted what she had done but had no recollection of events."

The incident happened at 11.30pm on July 19 and was captured by the garage's CCTV cameras, said Mr Rees in court last week. It came less than a month after Taylor had received a sus-

month after Taylor had received a suspended jail sentence for affray.

She was seen throwing things around the garage forecourt before picking up the paraffin and emptying it over other items stacked up for sale, the court heard.

the court heard.

Tim Sapwell, defending, said: "She was very drunk at the time. This was compounded by medication she was taking for severe post natal depression. "She could not believe what had hapened until she saw the CCTV film. She admitted that she was the woman in the pictures and was appalled by her behaviour." Taylor, of Dolphin Close, Goscote, Walsall, admitted committing arson while reckless to whether life was endangered.

and Chio
Senior pupils at a Walsall
dance studio have been in with
the mob with performances at a
hotel. The group based at Walsall
Academy of Dance have been
entertaining dinner guests at
The Village Hotel, Tempus Drive,
with a 1930s theme gangsters
and molls set.
The venture is the first core

Safer Walsall Partnership would like



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Rock cafe closes suddenly Flocking to services

A popular bar and nightclub in Walsall town centre has sud-denly closed, less than a year after its future was secured. Chicago Rock Cafe in Lichfield Street was one of the branches saved in April after its parent company went into administra-tion.

But the venue, which recently welcomed chart topping Olly Murs, has now shut unexpect-

Burglar

is sent

to jail

edly. A failure to renegotiate the lease with the landlord has been blamed for the decision by Atmosphere Bars and Clubs Ltd which runs the chain.

At least 10 jobs have been lost after bosses pulled the plug on the bar which has operated for around a decade.

around a decade.

The building is now being cleared before officially ceasing to trade. Atmosphere Bars and

Clubs chief executive David Crabtree said: "We are disappointed. We have had lots of successful years and have provided a good facility for the people of Walsall. We have been trying to negotiate a new rent level with the landlord which we haven't been able to do. We have decided not to stay on with the current rent levels as we are not making

More than 1,200 people flocked to a series of festive celebrations at Walsall's oldest place of worship.

cessful years and have provided a good facility for the people of Malsall. We have been trying to negotiate a new rent level with the landlord which we have the been able to do. We have decided not to stay on with the current rent levels as we are not making enough money."

Scores of people were at St Matthew's Church for the Cinderella pantomine and a Christmas Memoratories at State of the Church Sunday services recently, combined with figures from the Walsall Hospice's Light Up Your Life Service on Monday. St Matthew's rector, the

Other developments include a new Messy Church project for families unable to get to Sunday services at the hilltop site. It is the latest church to set up the informal worship service featuring art and craft, storytelling and food. The pirate-themed launch event this year attracted 40 adults and children.

Fat levels in region are highest in EU

Obesity levels in the West Midlands are the highest in Europe, latest figures claim. The statistics from the Association of Public Health Observatories show that the UK is the fattest member of the

U. The West Midlands has the highest level of obesity in the UK. The survey compared all regions across 27 countries in Europe using 37 health indicators in

The UK as a whole scored particularly badly on

obesity — being the fattest nation of all.

Within the UK it was the West Midlands that had the highest percentage of obese adults at 29 per cent — nearly double the EU average of 14 per cent and much higher than the 19 per cent rate seen in

cent — nearry double the Day Analyse.

and much higher than the 19 per cent rate seen in London.

The UK also performs badly on female cancer survival and infant deaths. The UK's female death rates from cancer were also shown to be among the worst in Europe.

But general life expectancy figures in the UK are slightly better than for EU counterparts and the nation also excels at treating heart disease.

The UK's early action on smoking has had a very positive impact on health, the report authors say. Professor Steve Field of the Royal College of General Practitioners, a practising GP at the Bellevue Medical Centre in inner-city Birmingham, said:
"Im appalled by the figures.
"I feel ashamed as a GP working in the West Midlands that this area has the highest percentage of obese adults in Europe.
"I hope we will be able to do more in the future to get people to take responsibility for their own leads?"

E WE WE WILL DE ABLE to do more in the future to get people to take responsibility for their own health." But Dr Claire Bradford and Professor John

Wilkinson, who compiled the report, said the information could help the UK improve its track record.

Dr Bradford said: "This type of data allows us to

compare not just between countries but within countries and to look at what is going well and what is

Festive feet fly along for big pudding race





Race winner Mike Aspinall with his medal.



Runners from left Trisha Weston, Jenny Jennings and Herchy Boal get set for the run.

museum opened will run until January 22.

Mark was born in 1963 and brought up in Walsall Wood. He moved to Swindon but kept clost ties with Walsall.

He became Brain of Britain in 2007 and World Quiz Champion in 2008.

Have winner mike Aspinal wit Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a berry conditions to take part in a Dorganise by Sneyd Striders, to Symdon Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a Dorganise by Sneyd Striders, to Spring the Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a Dorganise by Sneyd Striders, to Spring the Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a Dorganise by Sneyd Striders, to Spring the Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a Dorganise by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the window should be successful to Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a part of the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the with Walsall. He became Brain of Britain in 2007 and Market Six hundred people braved slipery conditions to take part in a part of the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the with the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the without the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders, to Swindon but kept close the surrected fun run in Bloxwich. Organised by Sneyd Striders

Aspinall, aged 27, of Rose Avenue route — which is two laps of a five in Oldbury, was crowned winner, with a time of 51 minutes and 32 seconds.

In the past, competitors had a 10-mile circuit to run but the event did not take place last year after police stopped it over traffic concerns in Warstone Road.

But the introduction of the new route — which is two laps of a five runte at which is two laps of a five currected for this year.

Winner Mr Aspinall said: "It was so cold. The first two miles even really slippy, it was like two concerns in Warstone Road.

But the introduction of the new route — which is two laps of a five mile course around the Vernon way seven all course around the Vernon allowed it to be researched and the Vernon way seven all course around the Vernon way seven allowed and the Vernon way seven allowed all



Nine-year-old Grace Pinson-Bradley helped out giving out bottles of water at the water station.

Estate will get CCTV cameras

A Walsall housing estate landlord is to put up 16 CCTV cameras in a £10,000 scheme to combat antisocial behaviour. Yobs are playing loud music from cars late at night, prompting calls to police about the constant nuisance in Treyamon Road, Park Hall estate. The problems have led Steve Healey, landlord of the precinct — which also includes 17 shop units—to agree to the installation of 16 cameras. The equipment would digitally record incidents.

Mr Healey, from Essex-based Metro private investment company, said they could access the footage when complaints are made and take action if necessary.

necessary.

He said: "We are just sorting the contractors at the

moment and hope to get the cameras in place in the next few weeks, but it won't be before Christmas. We are hoping it will put an end to the problem."

Walsall Council's area partnership team, local police, Accord Housing, shop owners and the community have been working together to clamp down on anti-social behaviour in Park Hall for weeks.

Peridart's walls for who led the according to work.

anti-social behaviour in Park Hall for weeks. Residents' calls for help led the agencies to work together and push for change, and the neighbourhood watch group has agreed to stump up £200 to install signs warning would-be trouble makers the area is under surveillance. Communities chief Councillor Zahid Ali, said: "We held several meetings with members of the local community and there was no doubt there has been a significant anti-social behaviour problem in parts of Park Hall."

Boxing action at Banks's

A programme of boxing action will be held at anks's Stadium in Walsall. The event will be held on February 24 at the Bescot Crescent venue, along with a performance by comedian Sean Percival. Tickets are £30, or £5 on the door for the boxing only.



display at Museum.

museum opened will run until January 22.

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Boxing Day bus booster

More than 150 Boxing Day bus services will run throughout the Black Country and Birmingham this year, transport bosses said. It is hoped the high number of serv-ices will bring more bargain-hunting shoppers out into the town centres and help to provide a boost for trade in the region.

and help to provide a boost for trade in the region.

Centro, National Express West Midlands and other bus companies have worked together to offer more services than ever before.

Two services have been introduced,

the X96 from Dudley to the Merry Hill Shopping Centre and the 302 from Walsall to Lower Farm. Birmingham's 76 route has also be

Walsall to Lower Farm.
Birmingham's 76 route has also be extended to run from Kings Heath to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Edgbaston. Centro has bolstered the Boxing Day network by subsidising extra services.
Chairman Angus Adams said: "We were keen that workers and shoppers could get into the main retail centres early and easily."
Boxing Day bus services will operate between 9am and 7.30pm, with a flat fare of £1.70 adult and 85p. child. The Midland Metro will operate and 6pm. No trains run Boxing Day.
On December 27 and 28, a Sunday service will operate on most routes. Train services will operate to a reduced timetable, with stations on the Cross City line between Birmingham New Street and Redditch served by a rail replacement bus.
The Midland Metro will operate as Sunday service. On December 29 to New Year's Eve, most bus services will operate as Sunday services will operate services will operate as Sunday service.

Police patrols stepped up

Police patrols have been stepped up at a shopping complex in Willenhall to stop anti-social behaviour and shoplifting.

Officers from West Midlands Police are focussing on The Square in New Invention.

Acting Sergeant Roxy Kudhail, from the North Willenhall and New Invention policing team, said: "We have received complaints of general noise and nuisance by young people near to the shops on The Square.

"We have also received complaints from local retailers about people shoplifting.
"We have set up operations to combat this and officers have increased patrols in the area at key times."

Woman attacked and bag is stolen

A woman was pushed to the floor and had her handbag stolen in Walsall.

The 39-year-old woman was robbed in Eldon Street, Chuckery at around 6pm on Monday.

She was attacked from behind by a thin, six-foot Asian man wearing a hooded top with two white vertical stripes and grey trousers.

The woman suffered sore knees in the attack and lost her bag, which contained £25 and personal items.

Fire crew revive guinea pig after blaze



This tiny guinea pig survived a fire in a Bloxwich back garden that claimed the lives of three other family pets.

Firefighters were called to Bagnall Street, Leamore, at 8.30pm last week after a shed and rabbit hutch caught alight. Tenvear-old Demilea Wood dialled 999 after spotting the flames.

The two-year-old guinea pig was revived by firefighter Nigel Hawkins, from Bloxwich fire station, who put an oxygen mask over her face to give her air. The black

to look out of their bedroom window and saw that the shed was on fire with lots of smoke pouring out of it.

"My daughter, Demilea, dialled 999 while my daughter-in-law, Grace, ran outside to try and get the pets out of the shed. But it was too dangerous."

Mrs Wood, 47, a housewife, said they had no idea what caused the fire which destroyed the small wooden shed, the rabbit hutch and scorched a second shed in the adjoining property.

Two robbers threaten ran with a crowbar

A terrified grandmother was threatened with a crowbar when burglars broke into her home and ordered she hand over money.

Two hooded robbers stormed into Elaine Wood's house and tried to force their way into her bedroom as she desperately held on to the door. The grandmother of 15 today told how she was ordered downstairs but as alarms went off the burglars made off with just £30.

Mrs Wood, aged 52, was at home in Rushall, Walsall, with her daughter Lorraine, 22, and three-year-old grand-daughter when the robbery took place.

The housewife said: "I heard the alarm going off so I jumped out of bed and opened the bedroom door.

"Two of them were standing there. I slammed the door back and put all my weight against it but I couldn't hold it.

Screaming

"I heard the crack of the crow bar against the bedroom door and my legs just went. We were all screaming. My grand-daughter was crying and yelling don't let them in."

crying and yelling don't let them in."

The raid took place at about 6.30am on December 9, while Mrs
Wood's husband Philip, a builder, was away on business. They
marched grandmother and mother-of-five Mrs Wood downstairs and
forced her to turn off the alarm before ordering her to hand over

oney. They said 'what have you got?' and I pointed to a small amount of

money in the cupboard."

The alarm automatically went off again, scaring the thieves who escaped through the patio door. All three were shaken but uninjured. Police are studying CCTV footage.

West Midlands Police spokeswoman Joanne Hunt said: "Two men are believed to have broken into the house, on Barns Lane, around 6.35am and 6.50am."

Last hospital block being brought down at Manor



Manor Hospital's St John's wing

Demolition of an historic hospital building dating back almost 200 years has begun – marking the end of

an era. St John's wing has been empty since the £170 million transformation of Walsall's Manor Hospital. It

Walsall's Manor Hospital. It was most recently a staff learning and development centre and home to the hospital radio station – now in the maternity unit.

Known as the Walsall Union Workhouse it was built in 1838, when it also replaced the 18th century built was the Morkhouse on what was then Chapel Green. Enlarged in 1842 and then again in 1881 and 1903.

The St John's Wing is the

The St John's Wing is the The St John's Wing is the final building to go in a revamp which saw units for family health, training and outpatients provided



Elaine Wood, from Walsall, in her bedroom where she was attacked by robbers.



The two attackers are captured on CCTV approaching the rear patio door.

New 999 HQ put on hold

A new ambulance station head-quarters in the heart of Walsall is on hold with another base now due to open in Aldridge.

open in Aldridge.

Plans for a modern central hub for paramedics were unveiled after it became public Morrisons were looking to take over Aldridge Ambulance Station to expand its store.

However, West Midlands Ambulance Service confirmed today another location had been found in Aldridge for a station.

The site has not been revealed at this stage although bosses insist it is a short-term lease measure. A review of provision in the area is currently taking place casting further doubt a base in Walsall will come to fruition in the near future.

base in Walsall will come to fruition in the near future.

The existing Aldridge Ambulance Station in Anchor Road is to be demolished to make way for the supermarket expansion. It was granted permission by Walsall Council at the second attempt earlier this year. It is anticipated paramedics will move into the new facilities in Aldridge in February. This will allow Morrisons to begin work to expand its store.

store.
West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman Murray MacGregor said: "We are hopeful we have found a location close to where the existing ambulance station is. "We will lease it over the short-term while we review the ambulance provision in the area. It is about the same size and will be more modern."

Keep goods locked away

Walsall police are warning festive shoppers and bargain hunters lock their goods in the boot while shop-

their goods in the boot while shopping.

Busy shoppers keen to get the shopping done in one go often return to the car to get rid of bags they can't carry. However, police are warning the sight of a car glittering with Christmas gifts or sales bargains could prove too much temptation for opportunistic thieves.

Police advice is to hide all shopping out of sight in the boot of the car and to remember to lock it!

Officers are also reminding shoppers at this time of year to always be aware of their surroundings and keep wallets and purses hidden at all times.

Other advice includes: don't leave

Other advice includes: don't leave other advice includes: don't leave anything on display in your car – even an old coat on the back seat is a temp-tation for someone to smash and grab. Thieves steal first and think about value later.

Dental surgery is given the go-ahead

A new dental surgery is to be opened in Great Barr after receiving the go-ahead from Walsall Council planners.

A former petrol filling station on the Aromer petro immig station on the corner of Moreton Avenue and Beacon Road is to be demolished for the scheme. It has been agreed by council officers under delegated powers.

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bad been working 24/7 to male. All the tops for Christmas. On Christmas Eoc he loaded up his eleigh with the tope and harnessed Rudol ph and the other reindocre to the front . . . then Mrs Claristinus guen laina lais pucionà l'unicla.

lust as he was Teaving Topkurd he had a flat tyre on the steigh, so he had to unioud all the tops and unite the reinderes to put the spare wheel on his howar doing this candwiches slipped from his pocket and he trod on thrus.

Just them a fairy came rounning up to him and eaid. What shall I do with this last Christmas Tree Santa?".....So now we all know how the fairly get to be adverse size ended up!

"Happy Christmas" TYRE SAVE ALDRIDGE 01922 456565





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thechronicle

Kennels' disease outbreak

Stray dogs can no longer be taken in by an animal rescue centre in Walsall after an outbreak of an infectious illness.

Councils have been stopped from taking the animals to Rosedene Animal Rescue in Rushall because of

the disease among existing dogs.

The Radley Road centre houses

the disease among existing dogs.

The Radley Road centre houses about 60 dogs at full capacity, and dog wardens in Sandwell and Dudley deliver strays there to be looked after. Both councils have been forced to suspend the service after news of the illness.

Phil Parker, spokesman for Dudley Council, said: "We have been notified by the vets that Rosedene animal rescue centre is currently not able to take stray dogs because of a report of an infectious illness among the animals.

"We are currently working on alternative kennelling arrangements."

The council has left a message on its website saying it is unable to provide a stray dog collection service, and it is hoped that the disruption will be short-lived and service will, hopefully, be resumed next week.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for safer communities Councillor

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for safer communities Councillor Derek Rowley said: "We temporarily suspended our stray dog service on Friday and are currently looking for alternative kennels. We hope the service will resume by the end of the week. Via our contact centre, we can pass the details of anyone who calls about a stray dog to K9 Search UK."

Street vice crackdown

GrackGown

More than 20 prostitutes have been issued with street cautions in the last three months as part of a crackdown on Walsall's vice trade.

Four were arrested and charged with loitering for the purpose of prostitution and one man arrested for soliciting a person for such a reason. He received a police caution as a total of 23 prostitutes have been given the street cautions since September by police. Hotspot areas in Caldmore, Palfrey and Pleck are being targeted with officers having the powers to confiscate and crush kerb crawlers' cars.

Five were seized in the 18 months prior to last summer with two given back to owners who paid a fine and the other three crushed after drivers refused to pay.

Sgt Richard Jacques, of Caldmore and Palfrey Neighbourhood Police Team, said: "We have had no further vehicles seized but five warnings issued, and it would appear that kerb crawlers are beginning to get the message.

"Over the past three months 23 sex

"Over the past three months 23 sex

Window into past

A book looking at Victorian times in Walsall through the view of a resident of the time is now available to buy. Billy Meikle's Window on Walsall, includes a series of twelve illustrated articles based on his own writings. It costs £5 from Walsall Local History Centre. Call 01922 721305 for details.

Company of year delight for Hydratight



Ltd) and Bill

A firm which has its head-quarters in Walsall has been named company of the year. Hydratight, which has its Hydratight, which has its
(RBG Ltd), Gary HQ in Darlaston, won the accoBurns (Bel
Valves), Alex
Hayward
The company, which has
(Pearson-Harper operations and agents all over

Ltd) and Bill the world, was honoured at the Abbott (RBG Ltd NOF Energy annual dinner at

Hardwick Hall in Sedgefield, Co Durham, on December 9. Hydratight is the world leader in specialist bolting and connection products and engi-neering services. Employing 1,000 people in 35 strategic locations, the company claims to set interna-tional standards in joint tional standards in joint integrity and can provide

bespoke connection and machining solutions.

The company has supplied the international oil, gas,

the international oil, gas, power generation, industrial and aerospace industries for more than 30 years. Wayne Dennis, commercial director of Hydratight, said: "Winning the Company of the Year Award is a great honour."

Pain on way as cuts bite says Tory leader

The leader of Walsall Council has warned that the multi-million-pound budget cuts would lead to the toughest time in

the borough in years.

Conservative-run Walsall has lost £19.5m in government grants over the next two years and will see its overall budget slashed from £296m to £262m when the council tax freeze is taken into account.

over the next two years and will st £296m to £262m when the council Walsall is already drawing up budget cuts of £65 million over the next three years — a move that will affect more than 400 jobs and result in the closure of libraries, markets and creches across the borough.

While last week's announcement looks less severe than already planned for, further cuts in funding have not been ruled out.

Councillor Mike Bird, leader of the council, said there would now have to be a "root and branch review" of services to see where cost-cutting measures could be made following the cuts announcement by Communities Secretary Eric Pickles.

The council will have to work out how they can continue to finance even basic services like bin collections and road maintenance.

Councillor Bird said: "This will inevitably impact on council jobs, but we will be doing everything possible to minimise the impact on employees." He described the cuts as disappointing. "We have got to deliver services in a

ing. "We have got to deliver services in a different way. In 12 or 18 months time, Walsall Council will not be the same as it is now."

Shared

"Shared
"Shared services, such as public health, between the Black Country councils will happen. There is no point us spending money for the same services four times over.

"The cuts are disappointing but we didn't start this. The Labour Government left this country in an awful mess and the current Government is used to tight the councillor Bird added: "We need to tighten our belts now. We don't know the full impact yet because we are still analysing it all but, inevitably, cuts lead to losses in jobs. We will try to accommodate these through voluntary redundancies but there may have to compulsory redundancies.

"Despite all this, I must commend the staff. Realism has crept into the council structure now, they accept that out in the wide world things like this have been happening for more than two years and now, unfortunately, it is in the public sector. But morale is high here were disappointed faces at first, but now people are getting their heads down and carrying on with it, which is the British spirit."

walsallchronicle@ expressandstar.co.uk

Councilor Tim Oliver said: "These cuts by the Government are much too far, much too fast. They are unnecessary and are based on an ideology rather than facts.

than facts.
"We have already seen the ending of Building Schools for the Future and there will now be even more losses in Walsall. We will definitely see the clo-

Walsall. We will definitely see the clo-sures of libraries, leisure centres, youth clubs and day centres, and there will be more potholes in the roads. "Overall, the impact will be clearly felt by the people in Walsall. More people will lose their jobs, both in and outside of the council, and there will be a downward spiral rather than

recovery."
Under cuts already revealed last month, Darlaston Market will be shut, creches axed and art galleries and museum services will be cut back. The total saved by the measures will be £16.6m over 12 months.

Permits

Townsfolk can also expect to see the cost of parking permits increased, less council-funded transport for the elderly and fewer street-cleaning staff and vehicles.

Redundancies will hit workers across the board and they will also be given less overtime.

All 16 Walsall libraries will be under review and the lowest performers face closure.

closure.

More than 180 vacant posts will not

More than 180 vacant posts will not be filled and the remaining job losses will be achieved through voluntary and compulsory redundancies.

In social care alone, 149 jobs are believed vlove trisk.

Other plane include the introduc-

In social care alone, 149 jobs are believed to be at risk.

Other plans include the introduction of charges for tradesmen's parking dispensations, the closure of New Art Gallery Walsall on Sundays and bank holidays, and the closure of creches at Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres.

The full council is scheduled to approve the final revenue budget for 2011-12 on February 24.

Neighbouring Sandwell Council, which is controlled by Labour, accused the Government of imposing "disgraceful" cuts which will bring about he loss of 700 public sector jobs.

The authority's annual budget will fall from £353m to £313m which includes a £35m cut in grants.

Heroes helped by concert



Fundraisers Alan Pooler, Margar et O'Callaghan and Anne Langley

Songsters raised a record £2,030 for Help For Heroes at their annual

tor help for fretees at their annual charity concert.

Willenhall Musical Society members said they were delighted with the amount – the most they have ever raised – following the event last month at Pool Hayes Community School, Castle Drive, Willenhall.

hall.

The City of Wolverhampton Brass
Band were guests at the concert,
giving their services free.

Society president Margaret
O'Callaghan, who handed over the

O'Callaghan, who handed over the money last week, said that the choir normally raises money for local char-ities but, on this occasion, wanted to help an "inspiring" national charity. In the past the choir has helped the

the O'Callaghan and Anne Langley
County Air Ambulance, the Coronary
After-Care Support Group at New
Cross Hospital's heart and lung
centre and Cancer Research UK,
based at Birmingham University
Medical Centre.
The group, which meets weekly for
rehearsals at Portobello Methodist
Church, New Street, Willenhall, has
been raising money for charity since
1993.

been raising money for charity since 1993.

The 40-strong choir is on the look-out for new members.

Mrs O'Callaghan said: "We have a young and dynamic new musical director, Justine Clarke, and deputy Matthew Colley and a superb accompanist in Bridget Tate.
"Any new members would receive a very warm welcome."

Alarm at hard-sell nuisance

Aggressive electricity salesmen are going door-to-door in Pelsall – with their forceful tactics worrying elderly

going door-to-door in Pelsall — with their forceful tactics worrying elderly residents.

Police said they had spoken to the business in question, asking them to speak to the employees about their behaviour.

West Midlands Police said they were legitimate salesmen, but advised concerned residents to contact trading standards officers at Walsall Council.

The salesmen have been in Nest Common, Norton Road and Fingerpost Drive over recent weeks.

Pelsall's Councillor Garry Perry said he had been inundated with calls from worried residents.

"People need to be very careful. These people are being very forceful and won't take "no for an answer.

"One resident told me the salesman was badgering him on the doorstep and then all the way down his drive-way.

"I think these people are almost as

way.
"I think these people are almost as bad as the distraction burglars. It can be very distressing for elderly and vulnerable people to have someone on their doorstep being so aggressive." Councillor Perry added: "We have

Councillor Perry added: "We have had a very bad winter, and people are worried about their energy bills. It is an issue that is playing on people's minds, but I don't want them being bullied into making a decision. Police said they had contacted the company in question, but would not reveal its name. Spokeswoman Gina Lycett said the sales workers were using hard tactics and anyone with any concerns should contact trading standards.

Walsall Council trading standards

Walsall Council trading standards department is on 0845 330 3313.

Officers chat to shoppers

Bobbies took time out from the beat to set up their own stall at Walsall Market and said the initiative had

been a success.

Police officers chatted to townsfolk about problems in their communities and also gave out crime prevention

and also gave out crime prevention advice.

Officers are manning the market stall at the town centre pitch one day a week throughout December. Each week, they are joined by a different organisation, including the fire service, council, NHS and Walsall Housing Group.

Officers are also giving out purse bells, which can be attached to purses and jingle when they are moved, and help cut purse dipping offences.

Councillor Zahid Ali, chairman of Safer Walsall Partnership, said: "The police in Walsall very much want to be at the heart of the community."

Calendar sale

A Walsall school's 2011 calendars are now on sale. Shelfield Academy has released the items, which feature artwork from more than 20 students at the Broad Way school, from years 10 to 13.

The glossy calendar costs £2.50 and available from the visitor or student receptions at the school.









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thechronicle

Residents move into £16m housing project

An established Walsall community has been rejuvenated with more than £16m of new homes.

£16m of new homes.
Walsall Housing Group (WHG) has built
130 homes in Bentley. Part of the investment included £7.5m from the Homes and
Communities Agency (HCA).
The properties range from two bedroom bungalows and apartments to four bedroom family
butter.

lows and apartments to four bedroom family houses.

The homes have been built on four sites within walking distance of each other and the final phase of the project – Parsons House – has now been handed over to whg.

Residents have immediately begun to move into the building, which has 60 two bedroom apartments and is exclusively for people aged over 55. Facilities at Parsons House for use by the residents include a lounge and two roof gardens with spectacular views across the Black Country skyline.

Regeneration

Gary Fulford, chief executive of WHG, said: "It is great to complete work on these four projects and to see the regeneration of the area. Many resdents of Parsons House are moving from nearby amily homes which will be used to house young

family homes which will be used to house young family homes which hildren.

"The properties have been built to a very high specification and I'm sure the residents will settle into their new surroundings very quickly." Coleshill-based contractor Frank Haslam Milan (FHM) has worked with WHG on the large scale regeneration project. Managing director Fraser Mercer added: "We are delighted to have handed over Parsons House to WHG and to have played an important part in the rejuvenation of Bentley."

played an important part in the rejuvenation of Bentley."

Work to regenerate the four sites began in summer 2008 and has brought four pieces of redundant land back into use. The sites were previously a clinic, vacant garages, a vandalised public house and two blocks of multi-storey flats. The redevelopment has been funded by whg, the HCA (the national housing and regeneration agency for England) and View, the regeneration fund jointly managed by WHG and Walsall Council.

Council.

Christine Seaton, Black Country area manager for the HCA West Midlands, said: "It is fantastic news that this scheme is now complete and the HCA is pleased our investment has enabled these 130 homes to be built, providing much-needed affordable housing in Walsall."



Fraser Mercer, MD of FHM, hands over Parsons House to Carole Wildman whg director of regeneration and development.



A distant view of Parsons House at night.



thechronicle

Dipsersal order to combat yobs

Troublemakers who cause nuisance in a neighbourhood on the Walsall and Sandwell border will be moved on when a six-month dispersal order comes into force

Sandwell border will be moved on when a six-month dispersal order comes into force this month.

Police have secured the order in Pheasey to crackdown on anti-social behaviour across the neighbourhood.

It was granted following consultation with Walsall Council and became active from December 22 and will run until January 22.

The dispersal order allows officers to remove groups of two or more young people between 9pm and 6am. Anyone under 16 found in the area without an adult or parent supervision can be taken

January 2.

back to their home. The order follows complaints about groups of young people congregating outside shops, bus shelters and causing general nuisance.

Streets covered include Collingwood Drive, Beacon Road, Doe Bank Lane and surrounding areas.

Sgt Andrew Middleton, from the Streetly and Pheasey neighbourhood team, said: "We have received complaints from local residents and businesses about young people congregating and causing nuisance in and around the Pheasey estate.

"The new dispersal order strengthens our power within the area, which will mean we can disperse groups. We take

anti-social behaviour seriously and hope the new dispersal order will be a very effective addition to our armoury when it comes to dealing with problems of this

nature."
A dispersal order was also granted in Bloxwich recently and is proving a

Stuccess.

The order, which covers the Mossley estate, was granted on November 15 and since then there have been fewer calls from residents reporting anti-social behaviour, which in the past has included gangs egging buildings and burning trees. Officers from West Midlands Police patrol the streets on a daily basis from 2pm until 10pm.

Bus fares Childhood memories are written down

rising in New Year Bus fares in the West Midlands will be increased by an inflation-busting 5.8 per cent from

A pensioner who grew up on a farm in Walsall has turned his childhood memories into a book.

Michael Power was raised on Podger's Farm, which used to be in Gower Street, Walsall.

The 77-year-old has now put his experiences in writing after being prompted by his daughter back in 2005.

Mr Power, now of St Davids Close, Pelsall, presented the completed book, Podger's Farm, to an audience at Waterstone's in Walsall town centre. January 2.

The announcement has been criticised as "disgusting" by Wolverhampton Councillor Judith Rowley, who sits on the region's transport authority Centro.

authority Centro.

The price of a single National Express West Midlands fare will go up from £1.70 to £1.80.

The price of a Daysaver ticket will rise by nearly three per cent, from £3.50 to £3.60.

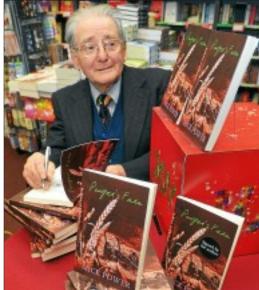
Rosses said revenue centre.

"The book has been received really well," said received really well," said the grandfather-of-three. "People like it because they remember the farm and they know the char-acters mentioned in it. "They have said it is a nice, friendly read. A few Bosses said revenue would go towards invest-

ing in the region's bus network next year, including the introduc-tion of 120 new vehicles. reviewers have said it is a good example of how to write family history." Mr Power lived on the

tion of 120 new vehicles. Write family history."

Metro fares will also increase under the changes. The cost of an adult Metro Daytripper ticket will go up from \$4.40 to \$4.50, an increase of 2.27 per cent, while a family Daytrip-\$6.99 and is available on per ticket will go up 0.5 \$6.99 and is available on per ticket will go up 0.5 \$6.99 and is available on per ticket will go up 0.5 \$6.99 and is available on support the proper ticket will go up 0.5 \$6.99 and is available on support the proper ticket will go up 0.5 \$6.99 and is available on support the properties of the properties o



Podger's Farm author Mike Power signs copies of his book at Waterstones





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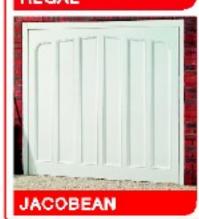
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Passing on the skills of life to help young

A group of men in Walsall are acting as role models to young people by passing

on their own experiences.

The group, called The Gathering, has launched the Pass It On project to share their knowledge and skills with teenagers in the Blakenall area of the borough who have been identified as subparable.

Blakenall area of the borough who have been identified as vulnerable.

The group are working with the support of Walsall Housing Group (whg) and YPiC (Young Person's information Centre).

The Gathering formed because its members shared a desire to improve things in their community for young people.

Connie Jennings, WHG's New Opportunities for Walsall(Now) Programme Manager, said: The concept is the group will pass on their experiences and life skills. Some have experienced life during the war which many of the young people are interested in hearing about and can also share their tales of life in the 1960s when you could walk out of one job and into another and how that differs today."

Vulnerable

Vulnerable

She added: "The aim is they will provide a male role model to youngsters who have been identified as vulnerable and 'at risk' for one reason or another. We are delighted to support the project as there are many potential benefits and the people involved are so passionate about it which is fantastic to see."

WHG is supporting the initiative in with YPiC and has funded a consultation exercise as part of the scheme.

the scheme.

Contractor Frank Haslam Milan (FHM) has also demonstrated its support by funding the pilot Pass It On project which was a cookery session teaching members of The Gathering how to make a Christmas cake. FHM funded a chef to go to YPiC's base in Ingram Road, Blakenall, to teach the recipe to the group so they could then pass it on to the young people they are working with.

Fraser Mercer, Managing Director at FHM, said: "As a company, we always strive to give something back to the communities in which we work. We are delighted to be supporting whg and the Pass It On campaign."

delighted to be supporting with and the Lass R. On-campaign.

Over the next year, Pass It On will involve a range of events such as fishing trips, outings and advice on things such as the world of work.

whg's support for the project has been made pos-sible through the Now programme which is funded by the Big Lottery, NHS Walsall and the Visionary Investment Enhancing Walsall fund.



Some members of The Gathering during the cookery workshop which launched the Pass It On project.



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A Verkene I Perine

Crime rates fall over Christmas

Recorded crime in Wakall town centre over Christmes has fallen by more than 40 percent even the last four years. Partner organisations who have worked together to tackle the problem are optimistic for a further fall in 2010.

Statistics show there were 179 offences recorded in Walsali town centre last December (2009) compared to 309 offences in the same period in 2006, ad icop of 42 percent - equation to 130 fewer incidents.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) has also dropped with 75 incidents recorded last year compared to 82 in December 2006, an eight per cent decrease.

Safer Walsall Partnership's aim is to ensure all the borough's residents are safe and secure during the festive season.

The partnership is focusing on a range of issues inducting personal safety, alcohol mishes, safety in the home, taking care on hights out, tackling environmental crime, domestic violence, avoiding food poisoning and not falling into the pittal of buying take goods.

The partnership billings together a range of agencies inclinding West Midlands Police. Walsall Council, West Midlands Rie Seruke, Nevi Horbons, Walsall Housing Group and NHS Walsall to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and a range of environmental issues in our neighbourhoods.

These stories and articles contain key messages from the partnership which I would ingeleve your to read in a bid to try and ensure it is a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year for all our residents.

Councillor Zahid AVG Chairman of Safer Walsall Partnership

Christmas is a time for giving not a time for taking

Christmas is a busy time for many people and Christmas shopping is a major part of many of our lives on the run up to the festive season.

Police in Walself will be viorking overtime to ensure your Christmas is crime free with extra support in the busy town centre at peak times.

To ensure you and your family keep safe we have the following common sense festive first and advise:

- Pinse and wallet dipping increase this time of yea: Walsall police staff their own market staff in Walsall and Wilenhall town centre. Why not visit is and collect a pulse/wallet safety device.
- Keep your purse in a zipped handbag away from prying eyes and don't keep your viallet in your back trouser pocket.
- Shops, restaments and puls will be extra lossy so d'on't leave lags over the back of chais.
- If you use public bansport just be aware of your surroundings and keep bags closed, mobile phones and MPSs out of sight.



Safety messages via text

Waball residents can now receive reginar community safety messages via text as part of a new service faunched by Safer Waball Partnership.

The text messages cover action which is being taken by the agencies who make up the partnership to tack is crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough.

Anyone who signs up to the text message service will receive a number of updates throughout the year. To sign up to the messaging service text the word SAFER followed by your name to 64446. The service is free but joining costs the normal text rate. This is a one-off charge.

New approach to engaging local residents

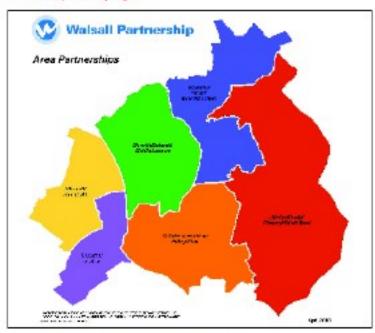
A new approach to engaging residents and ensuring services provided are more responsive to boat needs has been faunched by Walsall Partnership.

The Area Partnership Scheme aims to engage residents and implies them in how we should be providing our services. It's about bringing people and services together and addressing issues that affect local communities at a neighbourhood level.

Area managers are responsible for six new community areas, viliable replace the nine tocal Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs). The map shows how the borough is divided in pandigives examples of the work which has been achieved in each area so far.

Conneillor Zahid Ali, Walsall Council cabinet member for communities and partnerships, said: "The area partnership approach is a new way of working for us. Community meetings are still important but we are also looking at more innovative ways of engaging with our residents. We want our residents to have a greater say in what the problems in their community are and how they feel these can be resolved to help shape the way issues are tackled by the connoil and partner agencies working together: The aim of area partnerships is to help people be proud of the meeters and where they live through the 'we asked, you said, we did' approach."

For more information visit the Walsall Partnership website on www.welsalipertnership.org.uk or cell 01922 652029/652234/652237.



Area 1 - Brownhills, Peisall, Rephall and Shelffeld

- Waste land in Brownhills West to be turned into a football pitch.
- Security improved around play area in Cherwell Dive, Brownhills, which was located near a broy main road.
- Bun day held in Brownhills West to improve engagement with young people and raise awareness of Walsall Partnership.
- Theatregroup used to raise awareness of fraudsters among older and more uninerable members of society.

Area 2 - Aldridge, Streetly, Pheasey and Walsall Wood

- Diganised trip for over 50s gloup to Police Safe House, Brownhills.
- Working groups set up to tackle ASB at various sites in Aldridge and Walsalt.
 Wood including Oak Fank Leisure Centre.
- Hayhead Wood, Aldridge action taken to reduce levid and offersive behaviour.
- Punding used to bry a surveillance camera for use across the area.

Area 3 - Bloxwich, Elaborall, Birchills and Leasnon

- Working group established to tackle issues sundunding scrap merchants.
- AS8 issues at Penkridge Clase Playbuilder site. Youths identified and meeting held with them and their families to discuss their needs.
- Learnine Park Young friends of Learnine Park group formed to take ownership
 of park working towards addressing ASB concerns.
- Green Lane Capitist Church and surrounding shops/car park partners violiting together to teckle ASB which includes landscaping around church.
- Mossley Estate police working with the councils ASB team to address various.
 ASB issues in the community.

Area 4 - St Liatthews, Paddock, Palfrey and Pieck

- Park Hall shops agencies working together to tackle ASD.
- Working group set up to address issue of drugs paraphernalia in tovin centre.
- Caldingre, Paftey and Peck councillors, residents and partners working together to address the impact of sex workers and drug users in residential areas.

Advertio rest Fedure

Area 5 - Darlaston and Bentley

- Clean apparound Whitton Street park and youth club to facility ASB.
- Young people in Dentity invited to highlight issues of concern and how facilities
 can be improved.
- Consort Dife. Darlaston partnership work between Welsell Connoit British.
 Waferways and Welsell Police to reduce ASB from adjoining toxipath.
- Victoria Park, Certaston partnership viorit to reclince ASB.
- Modey People's Centre joint support from police. Walsall Housing Group and Walsall Council to support young people's activity sessions in response to an increase in ASB.

Area 6 - Willenhall and Short Heath

- Community meeting attended by more than 40 partners and members of the public to discuss ASD.
- Tenbury Close-old fencing replaced as part of joint agency approach to reduce ASB.
- The Square, Nevertheen working group set no to tackle ASB in this area.
- Willenhall South pibt project to tackle underage sale of aboliol.

Make your night out a night to remember for all the right reasons

It's the vrinter holidays and ithere's loads to look forward to: presents, parties, and plenty of booze. That's what Christinas is all about, right? Whilst everyone should have a meny Christmas, it's in portant to be aware of the diangers of making if just that little too meny. Follow these safer drinking top figs:

- Eat before you clink. If will help finit how fast the alcohol gets into your blood shear.
- Avoid drinking home alone wait to enjoydrinks whilst out with your friends.
- Drink at our own pace... avoid drinking in rounds as you may well end up drinking more than you intended.
- Consider afternating soft dirinks with alcoholic drinks. It will help to lessen
 the effects the next day and keep you hydrated.
- Keep your ditals with you at all times.
- Stay with fitends and get a test back together.
- After drinking give your body a break for at least 48 incurs to let it recover:



Avoid stress this Christmas

The festive season is upon us and many of you will be out celebrating with friends and family. Yet for others, the Christmas period can be a stressful time.

Walsall Housing Group (vilig) understands this yiell and provides support for its customers to help ease the added stresses associated with Christmes. For vilig, the quality of community ite is as important as the quality of the property in which you live:

Bramples of the support available include:-

- · Benefits and debt advice
- Mediation services to deal with disputes
- Witness and victim support(including domestic abuse)

Why also works closely with its pertinership agencies to significant hielp resolve these stiessful scenarios not only at Christmas but throughout the year, lielping to make Waballia happer and safer place to live.

To find out more about the support and advice available to wing distorners call 0000 55 5 6666 or visit vivvex wing.uk.com



Beware of bogus callers over Christmas

Residents in Walsall are being inged to be extraining lant even the festive season to ensure they do not become victims of doorstep crime.

WakaliColinci's Trading Standards officers and Wakali Police are viorking together to try and reduce the number of crimes committed on people's doos legs by reque traders. Rogue traders can invoke people offering gardening, driving and maintenance work, TV aertal repairs as well as people portraying themselves as bogus water, gas or cound lofficials with aftempt to trick unhanable people into lefting them into their home.

A TraderRegister has been established to which legitimate traders can sign up and promise to demonstrate their commitment to fair and honest trading practices. Although not an approval scheme, Waball TraderRegister seeks to promote reputable businesses in the building and home improvement sector and help residents to avoid failing uictim to dodgy, regue traders.

Councillor Zahid Alt, cabinet member for communities and partnerships at Wakall Council, said: "Reopie need to be extra uigitant over the festive season. Reopie should not leave any Christinas presents on display in their homes and also by not to have a large amount of money in the house. If anyone knocks on your door please make sure you check their identification and if necessary contact the company in question. If in doubt, do not open the door:"

for more information or advice contact Corpumer Direction 08454040506.

To search for a reliable tradesperson visit vivivi. TraderRegisteriorg. uk/Walsall

West Midlands Fire Service - So much more than fighting fires

Most people associate West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) with simply fighting tires but in Walsall their role is far more wide reaching.

WMFS sits on various partnerships including Wakall Partnership Safer Wakall Partnership and the Poad Casuaby Peduction Team. There are officers dedicated to arson prevention and anti-social behaviour and a cycle team who regularly go out to investigate fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and void buildings as well as engaging with young people.

The fire service also operates in an educational capacity for example there is a crash vehicle which we take to events to bring the dangers of chiung to life.

All of the borough's four fire stations - Walsal). Aldridge, Bloswich and Willenhall work alongside young people through groups such as the Young Firefighters Association. FRE programmes and family learning projects. As part of this work the young people, mainly aged between 11 and 18, undertake training similar to that of a working firefighter before graduating in a passing out, parade in front of their paients and donitaries.

The service also runs an active schools programme providing education around fire safety, road safety and most recently around fitness and obesity with its Multi Activity Sports Club.



LETTERS

Not apathetic dogowners, but pathetic communication

Dear Sir,
Re: Apathy on dog fines bid.
Walsall Chronicle Dec. 09
If Council chiefs were really

intent on obtaining opinions from dog walkers before potentially making them criminals for breaking proposed new restrictions, they would surely have used proper opinion research methods.

As it is, they hung an A4 notice on the fence by the gate, where most people entering the Arbore-

I have no knowledge of what method of communication was employed elsewhere, but I saw nothing at the entrance to Aldridge airport, nor Barr Beacon which are also favourite spots to let the dog have a run.

So for apathy on the part of the public, you should substitute "pathetic" on the attempt at public communication by the council.

What next to deprive us of our

freedom?

Anthony Harris and Co need their claws clipped. Soon, the Arboretum will be empty of dog walkers because we shall all be in Sutton Park, where the our pet dogs can run freely and get proper exercise.

Ron Binnington,
Park Hall.

Reeping the church spire

Dear Sir,
Re: Demolition of Mellish Road Church - Retention of the Tower and Spire. We believe the tower and Spire belonging to Mellish Road Church, sited as it is at one of the gateways to the town, should be retained on site.

Permitting the demolition of this building is a significant defeat for the borough in its struggle to retain some semblance of its heritage, also for the local community which has argued about the condition of this building for a great many years to little effect.

Any development of the site should include a provision that the tower and spire be retained.

J. French,
Acting Secretary
Walsall Civic Society

during the first week of reopening can possibly be true.

As the library is only opened for five days, then 1,200 books a day must have been verge of three books per person are taken — then 400 people a day vould have visited the library.

As the usual number of borrowers at any one time appears to be tweene of and 8 people the figures cannot add during the first week of reopening can possibly be true.

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Library figures don't add

Dear Sir,
Re: Bloswich refurbished library, and in particular the large reduction in the number of books which are available.
I fail to see how Councillor Anthony Harris's statement that 6,000 books were borrowed during the first week of reopening can possibly be true.

Dear Sir,
Re: Mr Bennett, letters,
November 11.
He labours his point about the
extent of UK representation in
the EU parliament. In fact, each
member country is allocated a
number of MEPs in proportion to
its population.
Mrs Bristow (on the same
page) calls for withdrawal of the
UK from Europe, mentioning the
internment of a young man in
Greece, who seemingly has no
hope of a fair trial. This case
seems to me to highlight faults in
the Greek legal system, not the

Labouring the point over extent of

UK representation in EU parliament

EUs. As for people being beaten up by police, EU human rights legislation expressly forbids this sort of activity.

With regard to the fifty or so other UK citizens in jail (presumably in EU countries, she does not make that clear), if Mrs. Bristow had a close relative imprisoned in a foreign country, would she prefer that that country had no legal links to hers, or that its legal system was closely related to our own?

Mr. Lenton, letters November 18 refers to the physical mistreatment of UKIP MEP Nikki

thechronicle

Sinclair when she attempted to unfurl a banner in the EU parliament building. Ms Sinclair claims she was badly treated by leaders of her own party in being removed as a UKIP MEP

According to Ms. Sinclaire, all this may be linked to her stated dissatisfaction with her party's links to right wing groups. Again, EU employment and human rights legislation is available in these sort of cases. I of course cannot judge either of these accusations, not having all the facts. David Clenton, Pelsall.

Thank to all of you Chance to help the who volunteered

Dear Sir,
A huge thank you goes out to the 70,000 people that took part in this year's CSV Make a Difference Day. On October 30 a record breaking number of people baked pumpkin pies for the elderly, made cupcakes for homeless people, planted bulbs in community parks, knitted hats for pre-mature babies and litter picked in their local high street.

Gordon Brown, David Blunkett and other MPs across the country swapped the floor of Westminster for the shop floor of their local Barnardo's shop. I spent time with volunteers planting trees and shrubs in preparation for winter.

There's more to come. Make volunteering your new year's resolution! Dig out your garden spades and support CSV Action Earth in spring 2011. For more information for CSV Action Earth; visit www.csv.org.uk/actionearth

Pete Waterman
CSV Action Earth,

planet's resources

I want to let your readers know about a new online initiative to inspire the public to come up with new

initiative to inspire the puties to help the environ-ment. We believe the project will really res-onate with the people of Walsall. Open Planet Ideas challenges people to find new ways to use technology to help pre-serve our planet's natural resources.

serve our planet's natural resources.
The winning idea will be developed by Sonto engineers. So log onto www.openplanetideas.co m to get involved.

Dax Lovegrove,
WWF UK.

Do you have something to say? Then write to Walsall Chronicle, S1-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton. WY1 1ES or email walsallchronicle@expressandstar.c o.uk. Letters are published at the editor's discretion and may be edited. All letters and emails must include a full name, address and contact number.

Carers are missing out on £840m in allowances

Dear Sir,
New Carers UK estimates
show that as many as 300,000
people in the UK who are caring
for ill or disabled loved ones,
unpaid, may be missing out on a
total of £840m in Carer's
Allowance.
They aren't being given infor-

Allowance.

They aren't being given information on what support they can claim and many don't see themselves as carers, but as mothers, sons, partners and friends looking after ill or disabled lovedones. As a result, they miss out on support and end up caring round the clock with out a break, and struggling to pay even basic food and heating bills.

Our economy and public services rely heavily on the support

provided by carers, which has been valued at a staggering £87 billion per year. Our whole society can play a

Our whole society can play a part in helping carers in return. We all know a friend or family member who is caring for an ill, frail or disabled loved one.

Carers UK is calling on everyone to take a few minutes today to check that any carers they know are getting support.

We have produced a free Carers Rights Guide, available through the Carers UK website (www.carersuk.org) or by calling our CarersLine on 0808 808 7777.

Imelia Redmond CBE.

Imelda Redmond CBE Chief Executive, Carers UK

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hose we said goodbye to in 2010





































oveable fool Norman lost

This year we said goodbye to one of the truly great talents of cinema while great talents from the heyday of the British film industry. Sir Norman Wisdom. The acting dynasty of the Redgraves was hit again with the death of Lynn whose first major film role was as Georgy Girl.

Hollywood legends Jean Simmons, Dennis Hopper and Tony Curtis also died.

Simmons will perhaps be best remembered for her role alongside Kirk Douglas in Spartacus and Hopper's career spanned almost 50 Higgins whose rapid style of play revigence.

Hollywood legends Jean Simmons, Dennis Hopper and Tony Curtis also died.

Simmons will perhaps be best remembered for her role alongside Higgins whose rapid style of play revigence.

Horne, Some Like It Hot. Boxing fans were saddened by the demise of Harry Carpenter who covered some of the biggest fights in the sport and who will always be associated with the death of John Lennon through his book Catcher in the Rye.

From the world too with the deaths of Dick forever be associated with the death of John Lennon through his book Catcher in the Rye.

From the world of politics the year said goodbye to former Labour leader Micrael Michael For and larger than life forever be sooned of the biggest fights in the sport and who will always be associated with the death of John Lennon through his book Catcher in the Rye.

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From the world of politics the year said goodbye to former Labour leader Michael Francis and JD Salinger who will always be associated with the death of Obin Lennon through his book Catcher in the Rye.

From the world of own Lennon through forever be down the francis and JD Salinger who will approve the whork of which we





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This week's Christmassy scenes were all taken on Pelsall Common by Tracey Harman of Shelfield, Walsall who has captured the green space wearing its wintry coat during the recent cold spell.



Snaps of life in the borough

There is no limit on the age or the subject all we ask is that they be as sharp and clear as possible and must be of reasonable quality for publication and of course feature some area or aspect of Walsall and its life. Send them in with your, name, address and contact number and a brief description of what the picture

shows.

Also we would like to hear about any interesting tales or stories attached to the photograph. Send them in either as a hard copy or electronically and we will do the rest. So get those cameras snapping, dig out those dusty old albums and send them to: Snappers Claim to Frame, Walsall Chronicle, Queen Street, Wolverhampton. W1 1ES or email them to walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk.









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sterigh to sterigh, lowing recently operated there lated branch in the heart of Braining rove "We have both been surplised, and pleased, with how the

business has progressed" states histt. "In this current dimme, people are discosing not to move but, stay and improve their home, and a frequencial add eightfloard.

value to their home. "Alchidge Freighnoed is a family owned business with the emphasis on a reloced, personal service and offers a unique service or all suites and packages, the stylich show connitions have come exclusive morble and Portuguese limestore displays, solid wood and stone suncursts.

The experienced arise staff me also able to offer packages to suit nil ages and styles

of frome, and offer quality products at offerdable prices, all well as incontributure

bespoile fireplaces to the correct size for each austoiner threquired. In addition to this we will be carrying out a bloga Sale on the Narkby 27th & Tuesday 28th December where we will be offering come innating deals, there is currently FREE fitting rentiable on all outles when purchased within fire the offer will come to an excitor the 28th December and to further incentives our customers we will also offer all our customers an additional 25% discount off my gas or electric file when purch med with a suite

The free fitting has proven to be very popular "adds Matt." We have been offering free fitting since we first graned the doors by a qualified Gas Safety argineer which has proved wely successful as this has arred our pustomer up to £250 off the cost of the instribution, however this will be the last time. we offer it so we have decided to open 27th 3 28th only to allow our customers one last change to seize this arrowing offer. I start believe physicalise in the area are currently offering thee fitting so I believe that this has been key to our success over the last few months."

With all this in mirel it has never been a better time to purchase your new freplace from us, with the ackled incentive of FREE fitting and 20% off your gas or destric fire and not to mention the 1941 and ease ckle to be implemented on the Tet January 2011 states Dan-

There will also live a rectuction on come of our showroom display auttes which has always proven to be very papeint with our customers

This is an offernot to be missed we will re-open Monday 27% December and Resulty 26th. Describer 2010 for 2 riggs out; and nell then be alread until Theorie; 4th January 2011

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, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31 2008 Page



Sport





EDGBASTON IS ALL SET FOR NEW AREA

walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk
Cricket fans can see the £30m expansion of Warwickshire's Edgbaston ground, increasing capacity to 25,000, continuing apace.
The playing surface, grown to Warwickshire's specification in a field in Lincolnshire, has been relaid with a
new drainage system and permanent floodlights fitted.
The framework for the new stand, which sits between the
Eric Hollies Stand and the Priory Stand is also nearly finished.
Bosses revealed the naming rights for the new stand would
be established in the new year.
Club chief executive Colin Povey said: "We're just comig
noto that stage of the development. We will be starting to
approach companies in the new year."
The curved shell of the building, which will eventually be
coated in silver-coloured aluminium panels, is nearly finished
and will expand the seating and media facilities, bringing the
stadium into line with the iconic press box at Lord's.
The finished work will feature five new floodlights, offices,
shops and apartments at the site. It is set for completion in
time for England's Test match against India on August 10 next
year.
Phil Macdonald, project director at Edgbaston, said: "The

rear.

Phil Macdonald, project director at Edgbaston, said: "The new facilities will be like rugby and football grounds with a covered concourse between the new stand and the Eric Hollies

Design

"The new stadium will have the best facilities for media in England with parts of the third and fourth floor for broadcast and print media inside the steel box design which will sit on top of the new stand."

The new stand."

and print media inside the steel box design which will sit on top of the new stand."

The work will give Warwickshire the best chance to compete for international matches, alongside the new competition from ground's including Durham's Chester-le-Street, Hampshire's Rose Bowl and Glamorgan's Swalec Stadium.

Povey added: The expansions puts us in a very strong position. We will have the largest capacity for a ground outside London and more than Trent Bridge's 17,000 in Nottingham and the 15,000 capacity at Cardiff, with whom we're effectively competing.

"It should keep Edgbaston on that main rosta of Test grounds."

The expansion will not harm the atmosphere Edgbaston has developed in recent years, the most vocal support England receive on home soil.

Mr Povey added: "England win here more often than anywhere else, the players love the noise and the crowds love the fun atmosphere so it's a win-win."

As the project nears completion, lifts stairs and seats will be installed.

Alongside the stadium work, the ground is being fitted with

installed.

Alongside the stadium work, the ground is being fitted with modern drainage to guarantee play by helping the outfield to cope with rain. Permanent floodlights will mean less light spillage from day/night matches for nearby residents and

spillage from day/night matches for nearby residents and make taking high catches easier for fielders as the bulbs used produce less glare.

The redevelopment is expected to guarantee a place for international cricket in Birmingham and an Ashes match in 2013. It will feature an "unusually shaped" square structure to house a banqueting suite. The former Calthorpe stand, the old pavilion and the old indoor cricket school were all bulldozed. The stadium has been reconfigured alongside the demolition and still has a capacity of 17,000.

Pupils packing a powerful punch



Packing a punch – Hydesville Tower pupils Aaron Blick, aged 11, left, Navin Johal, 10, Satya Wunnava, Alex Aldea, and Roop Dhillion, all aged 11, celebrate achieving their black belts with tutor Paul Cicarella.

Roop Dhillion, all aged 1

Five friends from a Walsall school are punching above their weight after earning black belts in karate.

The youngsters, aged 10 and 11, have gained their first Dans at the same time after five years of training.

The Hydesville Tower pupils had to impress with their kicking, punching and techniques during their assessments.

Eleven-year-olds Aaron Blick, Satya Wunnava, Alex Aldea, Roop Dhillion and Navin Johal, aged 10, all passed following the evaluation.

They started training at the school in Broadway North and have since gone

11, celebrate achieving their black belts on to classes at the University of Wolverhampton campus in Gorway Road, Walsall.
Sessions take place on Friday nights and Saturday mornings.
The children faced an eight hour assessment at the university recently before finding out they had been successful.
It marked the culmination of hours of practice.
Karate tutor Paul Cicarella praised the friends for their success at such a young age. Mr Cicarella said: "The standard of people going for the black belt is quite high this year. They did

with tutor Paul Cicarella.

really well, especially for their age as most don't make it that far."

The youngest to have achieved the black belt is Navin, who lives with his family in Willenhall.

He said: "I enjoy it because my friends are there and it is a lot of fun."

'It is my favourite activity along with football. I enjoy the sparring the best and it feels really good to get the black belt," he added.

His mother Jas Johal, aged 39, said: "They have all done very well and we are really proud of them.

'It is a big achievement at such a young age."

We must get the fans back says Byfield

Walsall skipper Darren Byfield has admitted the onus is on the Saddlers to get their fans back onside. Supporters' group Unity were due to launch 2,000 balloons to signify how many fans the club have lost since the end of the 2007-08 season. But the postponement of the home clash with Southampton because of a frozen pitch has put their pubers or iee.

But the postponement of the nome clash with Southampton because of a frozen pitch has put their plans on ice.

The fans have become increasingly frustrated with the Saddlers' season, with the club second bottom of League One, but Byfield insisted it is up to the players to change their minds.

"There's no point saying 'the fans aren't doing this or that' we have to deal with it," he said. "We've got to make it great for them, we can set them off.

"If you're telling yourself 'the fans aren't doing this it's because we're not doing what we should be doing on the pitch."

"We can ask the fans to be a bit more patient with us but they pay their money and have a right to say what they want.

"We've got to set them off, we've got to give the fans something to shout about."

Byfield is still out with a knee injury but is expected to step up his recovery after an injection this week.

The 34-year-old has been out since September and

this week.

The 34-year-old has been out since September and
will be out until the new year but the club are
hopeful his time on the sidelines is nearing an end.

It's looking up for **Hardly Athletic**

Hardly Athletic are looking up in the Wolver-ampton 6 a side Monday league as Jamie Woodhall ulled the strings in a battling 4-2 defeat of Sparkys Us FC.

Us FU. Mark Starbuck was influential for The Legends in a Theodov 6 a side league as he fired home four of Mark Starbuck was influential for The Legends in the Tuesday 6 a side league as he fired home four of his sides eight as Swan Village Crew were unable to reply. Wycombe Wanderers were also big winners, a James Whitehouse hat-trick inspiring a 9-3 defeat of Only Here For The Beer. Vention Wolves turned up the heat in the Walsall 6 a side Monday Premier Division with a thumping 7-0 victory over Coppice, whilst Bloxwich Youth eased out French & Dean Saunders, 4-0 the final

outcome.

Scalers FC are starting to find some form in Divi-Scalers FC are starting to find some form in Division One as Andy Grocott pulled the strings in a 4-1 triumph over Surreal Madrid, whilst Bayer Nevelusen hammered Miami Dolphins in the final tier, Joe Davies grabbing five of his sides seven with the latter unable to reply.

Tipton Spurs showed great battling qualities to maintain their healthy lead at the top of the Brierley Hill 6 a side First Division, edging out Pink Gunners 3-2, Rob Peel FC are doing their best to keep in touch after seeing off Pensnett Rejects 2-0.

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